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Olé! Tapas bring a taste of Spain to your table

Food and Wine magazine imports the best of Iberia in the form of tiny appetizers. Try these recipes



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• **Spanish tapas**

Feb. 2: Food and Wine magazine's Grace Parisi teaches the "Today" show's Al Roker how to make tapas, tiny appetizers from Spain.

Today show

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Updated: 11:19 p.m. PT Sept 27, 2005

Tired of serving mozzarella sticks and pigs-in-a-blanket at your parties? Food and Wine magazine took a trip to Spain and brought back the best finger food they could find. Known as tapas, these light appetizers will have you licking your fingers, and booking a ticket across the Atlantic.

Grace Parisi, senior test kitchen associate for Food and Wine, was invited on "Today" to share some of these simple but sensational dishes.

Garlicky Shrimp With Olive Oil


Total time: 20 minutes

La Casa del Abuelo, a tiny taberna in Madrid, is about to celebrate its 100th anniversary. Its gambas al ajillo (shrimp with garlic) are cooked in individual earthenware cazuelitas and served with plenty of bread to dip into the garlicky oil once the shrimp have been eaten. This dish can also be prepared in a skillet.

Garlicky Shrimp With Olive Oil

Grace Parisi

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8 first-course servings

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 6 whole dried red chilis
- 1/4 cup minced flat-leaf parsley
- 2 pounds shelled and deveined medium shrimp
- Salt
- Crusty bread, for serving

Recipe continues below ↓

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DIRECTIONS

In a very large, deep skillet, heat the olive oil until shimmering. Add the garlic, chilis and parsley and cook over moderately high heat for 10 seconds, stirring. Add the shrimp and cook over high heat, stirring

once, until they are pink and curled, 3 to 4 minutes. Season with salt and transfer to small bowls. Serve with crusty bread.

Wine: Dry sherry is great with the sweet shrimp. Try Hidalgo La Gitana Manzanilla or Emilio Lustau Papirusa Manzanilla.

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Egg and Potato Chip Tortilla

Total time: 10 minutes

Tortillas de patata, fluffy potato omelets cooked on both sides, are among Spain's signature dishes. Ferran Adrià is particularly proud of his inspired use of potato chips as a fast, easy alternative to the fried potatoes. Spanish cooks might use fresh chips from a churreria (a shop specializing in fried crullers), but thin supermarket chips like Lay's are a good substitute.

Egg and Potato Chip Tortilla

Grace Parisi

Serves 2

INGREDIENTS

- 4 large eggs
- Two 1-ounce bags of potato chips, coarsely crushed (2 cups)
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped Serrano ham
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped piquillo peppers
- Freshly ground pepper
- 1 teaspoon extra-virgin olive oil

DIRECTIONS

Preheat the broiler and position a rack 8 inches from the heat. Beat the eggs in a medium bowl. Transfer half of the beaten eggs to another bowl, stir in the crushed potato chips and let stand until slightly softened, about 5 minutes. Add the remaining beaten eggs, Serrano ham and piquillo peppers and season with pepper.

In a small nonstick ovenproof skillet, heat the olive oil. Add the egg mixture and cook over moderately high heat until the bottom is set and golden, about 3 minutes. Transfer the skillet to the broiler and broil for about 2 minutes, or until the top of the tortilla is golden and the center is slightly jiggly. Slide the tortilla onto a plate, cut in quarters and serve.

Wine: A simple white with good acidity and no oak is ideal for balancing the salty ham. Look for the 2002 Cune Monopole Blanco or a dry cava such as Juvé Y Camps Brut Nature.

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Lamb Meatballs With Mint

Total time: 50 minutes

The bar at Seville's Enrique Becerra restaurant serves a standout tapa, Albóndigas de Cordero a la Hierbabuena, meatballs made with the classic combination of lamb and mint.

Lamb Meatballs With Mint

Grace Parisi

Makes about 32 meatballs

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound lean ground lamb
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- 1/4 cup dry bread crumbs
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped mint
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 1 garlic clove, finely chopped
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 1/2 cup beef broth
- 1 cup tomato puree

DIRECTIONS

In a bowl, mix the lamb with the egg, bread crumbs and 1 tablespoon of the mint. Season with salt and pepper. Form the mixture into 1-inch balls.

Heat the olive oil in a very large skillet. Add the meatballs and fry over moderately high heat until browned all over, about 4 minutes. Transfer the meatballs to a plate.

Add the onion and garlic to the skillet and cook over moderate heat until softened, about 8 minutes. Add the wine and cook, stirring, until reduced by half, about 5 minutes. Transfer the mixture to a food processor. Add the remaining 1 tablespoon of mint and puree.

Return the onion puree to the skillet. Add the broth, tomato puree and meatballs and simmer over low heat until the meatballs are cooked through, about 10 minutes. Season with salt and pepper and serve.

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Crispy Chicken and Vegetable Croquettes

Active time: 1 hour

Total time: 2 hours 30 minutes

Ismael Prados, the Jamie Oliver of Catalonia, is the chef at La Vinya del Senyor, a Barcelona tapas bar with two branches. Prados presides over the newer one, on the north side of the city center, preparing delicious snacks like these crispy, delicately spiced Croquetes de Rostit.

Crispy Chicken and Vegetable Croquettes

Grace Parisi

Makes about 35 croquettes

INGREDIENTS

- 4 skinless, boneless chicken thighs
- 1 small onion, coarsely chopped
- 1 leek, white and light green parts only, cut into 1-inch lengths
- 1 carrot, cut into 1-inch chunks
- 1 garlic clove
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon Madras curry powder
- 2 cups whole milk
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1 stick (4 ounces) unsalted butter
- 3/4 cup all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting
- About 1 quart vegetable oil, for deep frying
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup dry bread crumbs

DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 375 F. In a small roasting pan, toss the chicken thighs with the onion, leek, carrot and garlic. Add the olive oil and 1-1/2 teaspoons of the Madras curry powder and season with salt and pepper. Roast, turning once, until the chicken thighs are cooked through and the vegetables are tender, about 35 minutes. Let cool.

Meanwhile, in a medium saucepan, bring the milk to a simmer with the remaining 1-1/2 teaspoons of curry powder over moderately high heat. Remove from the heat and let cool.

In a food processor, pulse the chicken with the roasted vegetables until a puree forms. Season the puree generously with salt and pepper.

Melt the butter in a large skillet. Add the 3/4 cup of flour and cook over moderately low heat, stirring constantly, until lightly browned. Stir in the chicken puree. Gradually add the milk, little by little at first and whisking constantly until it has all been added. Cook over low heat, stirring constantly, until the mixture is no longer sticky, about 15 minutes. Season with salt and pepper and let cool to room temperature, about 1 hour.

In a large saucepan, heat 1-1/2 inches of vegetable oil to 350°. On a lightly floured work surface, roll the croquette mixture into 3/4-inch-thick ropes. Cut the ropes into 1-1/2-inch pieces.

In a shallow bowl, beat the eggs. Spread the bread crumbs in another shallow bowl. Dip the croquettes in the egg, then coat all over with the bread crumbs.

Add the croquettes to the hot oil in batches, taking care not to crowd the pan, and fry until golden brown, about 1 minute. Transfer the croquettes to paper towels to drain and serve piping hot.

The recipe can be prepared through forming the "ropes" and refrigerated overnight.

A refreshing young rosé is a good balance to the spicy curry and crisp chicken. Try the 2003 González Lara Fuente del Conde Rosado de Tempranillo or the 2003 Faustino V Rosé.

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